

2015 Specialty Crop Block Grant FAQ

- 1) Is it allowable to pay a partner organization a percentage of the grant to provide financial oversight of the funds?

Because indirect costs are not an allowable expense for this grant, it would not be allowable to claim a set percent of the grant as an expense for financial management. That said, the cost of financial management would be allowable, if treated as a direct expense on the grant. This means that financial management staff would need to be listed in the budget narrative and those staff would only be able to charge time to the grant they could document was spent SCBG activities.

- 2) Are wages an allowable expense for this grant?

Salaries and wages are allowable as long as they can be tied to activities of the grant with time and effort reports (e.g. timesheets).

- 3) Where do we find information on what costs are allowable?

The most comprehensive guidance on allowable expenses can be found in the federal cost principals located in [Subpart E of 2 CFR 200](#). We also anticipate that USDA will publish a list of allowable and unallowable costs when they post this funding opportunity. Questions regarding allowable costs can be directed to the SCBG program manager at jauer@mt.gov.

- 4) Are there already project that are planned to be funded through this grant?

All of the funding from this grant will be awarded on a competitive basis. Projects awarded in previous years are fully funded through other sources.

- 5) Is a coop of growers eligible to apply?

Yes, as long as they are registered with the Montana Secretary of State and neither the organizations nor individuals involved are debarred or suspended from receiving federal funds.

- 6) Is it better for my organization to partner with a more experienced organization on our application?

Montana Department of Agriculture encourages all applicants to involve partners and stakeholders in their proposals. As to whether it is preferable to partner with a more experienced organization, this is up to the applicant. Experience in managing federal grants is not a requirement of this program. However, a demonstrated ability to successfully manage federal grants will make a stronger proposal.

- 7) Are sunflowers seeds grown for human consumption an eligible crop for SCBG funding?

Yes, sunflowers grown for ornamentation are eligible as well. However, sunflowers grown for oil production are not an eligible crop for this grant.

Updates March 13, 2015

- 8) I would like to propose a project conducting research on a specialty crop, does there need to be a connection to industry for my application to qualify?

To qualify for this funding opportunity, your project must enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. So, it is not sufficient to conduct research on a specialty crop without identifying a goal that will enhance the market for that crop.

Updates March 27, 2015

- 9) What is a reasonable amount of funding to request for a project?

Per the scoring matrix starting on page 28 of the manual, grant reviewers will assess whether the amount requested is reasonable and whether each line item in the budget is reasonable and appropriate. The minimum application amount is addressed in the proposal manual at \$30,000. However, information on maximum, average or expected request size is intentionally omitted.

- 10) Where should anticipated program income be reported in Webgrants?

The program income section of the budget was inadvertently dropped during a revision to the budget template. The section is now available in the application.

- 11) Where should project partners be listed in the application?

Project partners should be listed in the Project Support form under the section for stakeholders.

12) What is the department's expectation for demonstrating partnerships?

See page 18 of the [proposal manual](#). Strong applications will demonstrate project buy-in from the industry and other specialty crop stakeholders. If a number of organizations are working to address the same issues within the state, it is important that the applicant demonstrate that due diligence has been conducted to eliminate potential duplication of efforts.

13) Is there a minimum number of partners?

There is no minimum for demonstrating project partners.

14) Where is the most appropriate section of the application for general discussion of the project?

Applicants are strongly encouraged to avoid general discussion of the project and to focus on answering questions as they are posed in the application manual. The most general area for discussing the project will be in the narrative form under the Abstract and Project Purpose sections.

15) Our project represents a partnership between two organizations, one of which will be the lead applicant. As the lead applicant, can we include all of our partner organizations' expenses (personnel, supplies, other) into one amount in the "contractual" expenses category, since that is how we will be paying them? Or do we need to break all of their expenses out into line items?

If a contract or MOU will be in place to pay a partner organization for their contributions to the project, a single line in the contractual section of the budget is sufficient. However, the Contracted Activity narrative in the budget line should contain sufficient detail to show that funds budgeted will be used for allowable expenses.

16) Are we in compliance if we have used federal funds for the development and pilot phase of this project, which we are currently conducting?

Yes, as long as federal funds are not used to match federal funds and accounting systems and procedures are adequate to show the separation of funds.

17) Are we in compliance if we are actively seeking additional funds, including federal sources, to support out project?

Yes, as long as federal funds are not used to match federal funds and accounting systems and procedures are adequate to show the separation of funds.